1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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platform raised above the ground on wooden legs about 3 feet high, and consisting of a rectangular wooden frame from 5 to 7 feet long by from 5 to 3 feet broad; no attempt has been made to draw to scale those shown in the three house plans. On this frame is a framework of criss-cross strips of bamboo bark or *siari* (*Bauhinia vahlii*) creeper cords. In dry weather the father and children sleep on the floor, with possibly a reed sleeping-mat (*masni*) or a bark-cloak (*taghali*) beneath them, and a fire near by; in the rainy season they sleep on the *alpanji* platform, with a fire underneath them. At other times of year it is a convenient shelf for storing baskets and basketry materials, winnows, tools, cords, etc. Where, as in the Kurmer house illustrated, there is no *agha*, the husband may sleep on the floor of the veranda in dry weather, and in wet weather on a sleeping-mat in the *angadi*, while the wife sleeps on the floor of the *lonu*.

The *angadi* is primarily the kitchen and secondarily the sleeping room of the wife and any mature daughter. Besides one or more hearths (*o'idal*) of baked mud, roughly horseshoe shaped, or consisting of three stones, there are one or more mortar holes (*akhi*) sunk in the floor and carefully plastered with mud in which grain is pounded with the club-shaped pestle (*uspal*), and numerous pots or gourd bottles of water, supplies of leaves for leaf-plates, bamboo splinters for stitching them together and baskets of all shapes and sizes. It is taboo for mature women to sleep anywhere except on the floor, and so no *alpanji* is provided in *angadi* or *hala* room. Actually the original custom, still followed in some remote villages, seems to have been for all men to sleep in the village dormitory, or at least under their granaries, and not in the house, save in the season when they slept in the fields; for this reason the Kurmer house without any *agha* probably is an older type than the Handawada. At present, except during the season when all males are sleeping in the field houses, married men as well as bachelors sleep in the village dormitory whenever sexual continence has to be observed, e.g. from the night before the sowing of the *penda* fields till the first blades sprout, and before certain ceremonies.[1] The Hill Marias are still doubtful about the propriety of men sleeping in the house and regard the jungle or some place overshadowed by the thick leaves of the *siari* (*Bauhinia vahlii*) creeper as the right place for intercourse between man and wife; but the old prejudice is fast dying out.[1]

[1] Russell and Hiralal (article, 'Gond', III, 131-2) write :—'In one part of Bastar they have a curious rule that all males, even the married, must sleep in the common house for the eight months of the open season, while their wives sleep in their own houses. A Maria Gond thinks it impious to have sexual intercourse with his wife in his house, as it would be an insult to the

[see cat. 116, p. 420. – Analyst]

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it is not much used among Bison-horn and Hill Marias in comparison to the *salphi* or sago palm (*Caryota urens*; Maria, *garga marra*) which is found wild and is extensively propagated. When the *salphi*, after much cutting of the spadix for the intoxicating sap, ceases to flower, the interior of the stem yields a fibrous pith. This the Hill Maria women (probably the Bison-horn also) pound on a large flat stone with a heavy oval pebble held in their right hand, to separate pith from fibre. The resultant pith 'grain' looks like lime, and is steamed into cakes; an earthenware pot has a little water poured into it, and over the water bamboo sticks are criss-crossed and covered with *siari* leaves as a platform for the pith to be steamed; no salt or sugar is added.

Actually most of the fruit already mentioned is collected by women and children; the men, of course, deal with the toddy and sago palm sap, and their methods will be described in the section on drinking and intoxicants. The men collect those forest products which they need for basketry or rope making, or in finding which there is an element of the chase. They like to roam about with their bows and arrows while their women are busy gathering fruit.

The women gather also various leaves, flowers and seeds as vegetables. They use the young green leaves and the seeds of the sal (*Shorea robusta*); the flowers of the *giril marra* shrub (*Indigofera arborea*); the young curled fronds of bracken in the Abujhmar hills, possibly also on the Bailadila mountains, where, too, it is common (the Hill Marias call it *handa jabba* and the Bison-horn *anda koser*); the seeds of the marking nut tree (*Semecarpus anacardium*; *bhelwa*); the young green shoots, pith and seeds of the bamboo; the fruits of the *ber* (*Zizyphus jujuba*). The digging of forest roots and yams in the rains is one of the women's chief occupations; there are many varieties, and some are now cultivated. In the early rains a much sought after foods are the *khudrati* or *bora* fungus, and the mushroom. Various wild plants are gathered as vegetables from marsh and river valley, especially the *chiur*, the long thin leaves of which are like small hyacinth leaves, and are a favourite food of wild buffalo and bison. Women and men collect large supplies of *siari* or elephant creeper leaves for use as plates and drinking vessels. *Aki* is the Gondi word for a leaf, and the assonance *aking-waking* is commonly used as covering all produce which the Maria collects from the forest.

In August and September the Bison-horn Maria women spend hours swishing a basket[1] over the tops of certain wild grasses in the fields to collect the seeds, which are eaten like the small hill grains.

[1] Hill Maria women also do this, using little wicker-work shields fastened to bamboo sticks to beat the grass seeds into a basket.

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A little later they collect *kapani*, the wild bearded rice common in all old rice fields and fallows and at the edges of standing water, by holding a winnowing-fan in one hand and beating the grain of the standing ripe plants into it with the other; the bearded ears are sometimes plaited into '*sela*' fringes for ornamenting doors of houses at the new-eating festivals.

The men are adept in collecting the honey of various kinds of bees, though sometimes, despite forest rules, too prone to save trouble by felling rather than climbing a fine tree. For this purpose, and for tapping palm trees, they often fasten to the trunks of trees long thick bamboos, cutting the side shoots down to stumps four or five inches long to serve as ladder rungs. Gums are collected from many species of trees, for use as bird-lime or in securing the *kosa* silk whipping of arrow-heads, etc. In Dantewara and Bijapur tahsils the Forest Department has quantities of *tasar* silk cocoons collected by Bison-horn Maria men when, in the rains in the intervals between sowing and reaping their various crops, they go out to the forests in search of such delicacies as red ants' nests, ant-eaters, rats, squirrels and grubs. The cocoons are high on sal or *saja* trees; where the climbers cannot reach them they use long bamboo poles with a piece of bamboo fastened at an acute angle at the end to serve as a hook. They get about Rs. 3 a thousand cocoons from the Koshta weavers who employ them; the Hill Maria, however, generally collects only what cocoons he needs for his own purposes. Red ants' nests are cooked, leaves, ants and all, either with *pej* or *gato*, or by themselves and eaten with pulses as a vegetable. They are also a favourite febrifuge; a rough and ready remedy is to shake out the live red ants on to the patient's skull, when the formic acid of their stings is said to reduce the fever; the more elaborate method is to boil the nest, ants and all, and to strain off and use the juice as a febrifuge in small doses; this juice is said to taste sharper than any lime and believed to be invaluable for a long-standing fever. In collecting the palms of the dwarf palms *chhind* (*Phoenix sylvestris*), *P. acaulis*, and *buta chhind* (*P. farinifera*) for use for thatching, basketry or making rough cords for binding fences, the men not only collect the small dates or the flowers (according to season) and the edible pith of the *buta chhind*, but also the fat white grub of a certain beetle, which is also found in the stems of the toddy palm and in fresh green monsoon bamboo shoots. This is eaten fried in ghee or oil with a little spice and chillies, and is regarded as a great delicacy; it is sold in the Jagdalpur market for three or four pice, and even high-caste Hindus buy it. When white ants emerge in flying swarms early in the monsoon they collect them after they have shed their wings, or pull the wings

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224 sprung free of the ' tap ' of the *dim-kola* and so released the back end of the *mirpos-kola*, the front end of which would have given way beneath the weight of the *adam-guryu* cross-beam and brought the stone-weighted *kalk-panj* fall beams crashing down on to the animal, while the *adam-guryu* fell into the slot prepared for it in the ground. The trap had been set for six weeks with no result, and they had not tried making a trap of this kind for years. It looked too fragile for any but a very small panther ; the bait-stick was barely 2½ feet from the mouth of the trap ; and the fall even at the mouth was only 20 inches. Kalmu Boda, the expert *shikari* who is *pargana* headman of the Bison-horn villages around Barsur, was openly scornful.

Snares and springes for pea-fowl, jungle-fowl and snipe, and bird-lime for other birds, with occasional nets for birds or deer complete the Hill Maria's hunting equipment. I have not seen him using nets ; the villages where most nets are to be seen are those near the Bison-horn country, and their users presumably copy Bison-horn methods.

Bison-horn Maria hunting

In the most advanced and thickest populated parts of the Bison-horn Maria country, such as the Paknar, Katakalian and Kuakonda tracts, it is difficult to find any wild creature except birds and insects. In Hindu India the monkey is always present, being sacred and so free to devour anyone's crops. The Maria eats monkey as readily as any other animal, and the monkey long ago decided to avoid his lands. At my camp at Katakalian there was a sudden shout and dozens of Marias left me to rush at a tree on which someone had seen a luckless flying squirrel (*Pteromys petaurista*). Even hares and rats are said to be less common here than elsewhere. Like Hill Marias, Bison-horn Marias spend hours digging out field rats and mice, carefully wrapping each victim in grass before carrying them home in glee to roast them whole skewered on bamboo spits, singeing off the fur. They sell and buy rat meat in the markets, either raw, or in little jerked squares on bamboo spits ; but that they are getting sensitive to ridicule on this account is shown by the fact that the buyer must ask for ' earth-roots ', not rats or mice. Frogs are another delicacy, also spitted and roast. Python, *daman* and non-poisonous snakes are eagerly sought after ; for ordinary eating they skin, slice and fillet the snake and stew it with spices, when they say it tastes midway between fish and chicken. Small portions of python separately cooked are regarded as a valuable cure for ' pot-belly '.

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The great round of ritual vernal hunts preceding sowing have been the chief cause of the extermination of game. The religious

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pig, sprinkles their blood over the goddess and over each of the *saja* leaves, and breaks the top of each of the eggs with his knife. Then he offers the goddess ears of *chikma*, other early millets, and mountain rice; if the latter is not yet in ear, he offers a flowering rice stalk. He then prostrates himself with the palms of his hands flat on the ground, belches, and prays the goddess as their mother to accept these first-fruits, to grant them grace to have their new-eating feast, and to save her witless children from all troubles and adversity. He then hands each man one of the bloodstained *saja* leaves, and, leaving someone to watch over the slain victims, all go and bury the leaves in their fields. Each man then brings a handful of old rice from his house to the *kadri-bera* field, and hands it over to the *perma*, who cooks the bodies of the victims and the rice separately, and distributes them to the men, who eat their share there.

Meanwhile the women, for whom it has been taboo to attend the ceremony in the *kadri-bera* field and the burial of the leaves, will have prepared meal from the new millets and mountain rice; the grains are still rather green, and are roughly threshed, parched in a broken earthen crock held over the fire, pounded with the *uspal* husker, winnowed free of husks, and ground between two hand mill-stones with a quantity of salt; some mix in a little *gur* sugar. The wife of each head of a family cooks the new flour in a Hanal Kunda or Pot of the Departed (not, of course, that in which oil, etc., is placed in the name of the newly dead), along with new vegetables from the *bari*, other than gourds, beans and cucumbers. When the head of the family returns from the sacrificial meal already described, he brings with him the junior members of his family, but *not* his wife-clan relatives, and some of them bring small chickens. He sacrifices these to the Departed, offers them some of the new flour and vegetables, and pours a libation of *mahua* spirit and *landa* on the floor of the corner of the *wijja-lon* room that is dedicated to the cult of the Departed. The new flour and vegetables are then eaten in his house by them, their wives and their unmarried children; but no one of any other clan may participate, and on that day no one must give anything out of his house, not even fire from his hearth, to anyone of another clan.

On the next day, however, there is the usual remains-eating feast (*Hava Tindana*) in their houses, to which they are free to invite friends, brother-clan and wife-clan relatives, whom they regale on *mahua* spirit and on *landa*. In the evening they dance the *kortam* dance without their bison-horn head-dresses, but with men and women dancing separately in their usual way.

In villages where there is a log-god and a *Mataguri* or hut-shrine of Mata, the sacrifices on the first day are made before each, the

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241 they still make a small *parka* plot somewhere in their fields so that some of the grain will mature quickly and they will have enough to eat at home.

Their big fields are generally embanked, often irrigated with some ingenuity. They are distinguished according to the soil and location—*dhar neli* or *gabhār* is a low-lying rice-field, a *tikra* is a field on a slope, a *dobka* or *mal* is an ordinary level field—and they are often given names, the Cat-stone Field, the Field of the Frogs, the Field of the Ghost.[1]

FIG. 4. Yerk used in the same way as the gagra, but of a different pattern
Length 3′ 10″

Perhaps the most treasured thing, and often actually the most profitable, in a Muria's agricultural life is the *bāri* or garden enclosure near his house. This is carefully fenced with a stockade or with bamboo wattle-work, and is manured and enriched with the sweepings of the house and the droppings of the cattle throughout the year.

Here the Muria sows the profitable oil-seeds, sarson, til or arsi; here he sets beans by the fence, and a broad patch of red *jira* spinach. Often he plants some castor trees, or a sago-palm, sometimes plantain and papaya. One specially guarded patch contains his tobacco supply for the year.

Once the seed is sown, the attention of chelik and motiari is largely diverted from the ghotul to the fields. Ghotul life is almost suspended, though the smaller children go and solemnly imitate the habits of their elders. Little fires twinkle in the fields and the sweet music of the flute comes through the darkness.

When the first grain appears on the shoots, the Gaita offers an egg to Tallur Muttai to ensure its safety.

During the season, in the permanent fields there is a lot to be done. The embankments must be constantly repaired. The sprouting rice must be puddled with a board dragged by bullocks. The girls must go to weed. The boys set fish-traps where the water escapes through the embankments. It is a time of danger and taboo: an act of adultery may blight the grain, a quarrel discourage its growth.

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Everybody goes to reap the crop. They use the ordinary iron sickle. Before thrashing, the bundles are piled up on wooden platforms, heaped into rough bins, sometimes just stacked in neat circles on the ground.

The first sheaf cut is tied to a tree overlooking the field or clearing.

252 The *kara* thrashing-floor is prepared by men, for in many villages it is taboo for women to do this, and so the men clear the ground in or near the field, plaster and cow-dung it. In the middle they place a pole (*mer-gutta*) to the top of which they often tie a sheaf (Plate X). If they are going to use oxen, they attach a pole to the *mer-gutta* and drive the animals round in the usual way. Often, however, the Muria thrash with their feet (Plate X). If there

[1] For an account of names of fields in India, see *North Indian Notes and Queries*, Vol. I (1891), pp. 113 and 141.

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is only a little to be done, the crop is piled round the pole and boys thrash it there: otherwise a bamboo rail is tied to the post and perhaps supported by another on the circumference of the thrashing-floor. A line of men hold on to the rail, sometimes there are two lines on either side, and so they thrash. I have not seen them go round and round in procession, as the Baiga do.

A rich man with many fields often employs the chelik to work for him, but it is *polo* (taboo) for the motiari to help in the thrashing.

It is also taboo for women to winnow. A chelik stands on the thrashing-floor and gently shakes the grain from a basket held high above his head: the wind carries the chaff away. Sometimes another man fans the falling grain with a winnowing-fan or big basket and they generally fan the pile of grain to remove any chaff that may have settled on it.

Boys fan bride and bridegroom at a wedding in just the same way after giving them their ceremonial bath.

When the work is complete, the Kada Marenga ceremony is performed, and offerings are made to the Village Mother.

Storing the Grain

The Muria do not make corporate granaries, but especially in the west each large house has a special granary, raised on pillars from the ground.

In the house, the dhusir-bin made of paddy rope is often used. A network of siari cords is laid on the ground. On this the Muria coil paddy rope anti-clockwise to about two feet diameter, lay paddy straw on this, pour on grain, wind the rope round, gradually build it up, pour in more grain, pound it down with a husker and tie it. At the top they place a ring of siari cord and slip the ropes through it. Then they beat indentations into the top of the bin and tie the cords along them. This bin is aptly described as the 'boy who binds a cloth tightly round his waist'.

Special bins are made for the unthrashed mandia in the *bīri*. Square boxes are made of date-palm leaves tied to a wooden frame and bound round and round with rope, supported by poles above the ground. The bin is filled with the mandia and closed with grass at the top. Sometimes the walls are of matting.

The New Eating Ceremonies

Before there can be any general use either of crops or the various forms of jungle produce, there must be the appropriate Korta Tindana, or First Eating ceremony, a sort of Harvest Thanksgiving in honour of the earth which has given the crop. The ceremonies at all these are alike, except for the different fruits or grains that form the bulk of the feast; I describe a typical Marka Pandum at Masora in Chapter VII, and need do no more here than give a list of the chief festivals.

Irpu Pandum (February-March). The ceremonial gathering of the first fruits of the mahua tree, and a feast at which some of them are eaten.

Marka Pandum (March). A ceremonial feast of the first mangoes and any other wild fruit that may be ready, such as tendu, char or karmata.

Kurum Pandum (August). The first eating of the small grains and millets.

Koria or *Puna Pandum* (September). The first eating of the new rice, together with gourds and cucumbers.

Jata Pandum (December-January). Often called Pupal Pandum, the first eating of pulses and beans, and use of sesamum and castor oil.

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THE MURIA'S LIVELIHOOD

Their interest in these household occupations may be seen in scores of homely riddles, which describe them in vivid symbol. 883

Drumming, drumming, what is that drum?
At cock-crow she is drumming.

A motiari is expected to be back from the ghotul by dawn and should be busy husking grain before her parents are awake.

A broom is 'the thing that licks quickly and then falls flat'; a leaf-plate is 'the little tank full of thorns' or 'the boy that morning and evening gives a share to all'; a pot of curds hawked round the village is described as 'the white cock going from house to house'.

But the main interest of chelik and motiari—for after all they are still only boys and girls—is in food. *'Bhaio bikân handiya ma dhyân.* As soon as morning comes, his mind is in the cooking-pot.' Of things to eat the Muria have a considerable variety, much more than would be available to people of similar economic status in a town. All the rich and varied produce of the great Bastar jungles is open to them; the State has not yet interfered with their right to natural roots, fruit and leaves—they may take what they want so long as they do no damage. 262

As Grigson says of the Maria: 'The difficulty is not so much to say what they collect and eat as what they do not; in fact, if one were to take one of the lists of trees, shrubs and herbs compiled by the Central Provinces Forest Department and copy from it the names of all edible forest products, one would not even then produce an exhaustive list.'[1] I do not propose to give such a list here; but I will briefly mention the things that chelik and motiari like best. Meat and fish probably stand first in popularity—I will describe them later.

FIG. 5. Uspal rice husker. Length 5' 9"

Among fruit trees, the mahua is supreme. When the flowers begin to fall, the cattle are kept tied up until the women and children have gathered them. They spread them in bright yellow patches swiftly turning brown on rocks, before their houses, in specially-made enclosures. When dry enough, the flowers are beaten with heavy sticks, sometimes with the wooden doors of a pigsty. The pulp is made into chutney with dried khamer fruit and tamarind kernels, and eaten with rice or gruel. The oil is used for cooking and lighting. The flowers are stored in baskets, and make one of the most eagerly demanded gifts when the chelik make a dance tour of a village. 262 252 222 [373]

Another popular fruit is, of course, the mango. The motiari fetch baskets of wild mangoes from the forest where the trees grow in profusion, cut them up in the ghotul and give them with chilli and salt to the chelik. 262 227 [563]

Aonra fruit is liked, and there are many riddles about it. 'A green pigeon came from Porrobhum and laid its eggs on a leaf.' 'The white bird hides its eggs under its wings.' Other popular fruits are those of the thorny bhoir—'Mother bites, but daughter invites'; the kurlu—'The little sparrow's liver is sweet'; the simra, the char, the jamun and the tamarind. Tendu fruit is picked while still unripe and put in kodon chaff to mature. Sometimes it is buried in the ground and a fire is lit above it. When ripe, it is eaten raw. Wild figs are eaten ripe or dried and ground up with flour. [524] [251]

[1] Grigson, op. cit., p. 151.

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

262 222 252 [278] The children, as well as older people, kill and eat frogs when they can. In the rains they creep up to any small pond and with their sticks kill the frogs before they are able to escape into the water. They remove the skin and stomach and roast the rest. Many people, however, only eat the hind legs, regarding the rest as dangerous. Frog's flesh is believed to be a useful remedy for swollen glands.[1] Various kinds of lizards are eaten the same way. In most of the less sophisticated villages red ants are valued both for food and as a febrifuge. A party of chelik go through the forest until they see the ants' nests high up in the branches of a tree. Then one of them climbs up and breaks off or cuts all the branches on which the nests are and throws them to the ground. The others quickly prepare leaf-cups and one of them plunges his hands into the nests and fills the cups with the ants and their eggs. They brush off the eggs and tie up the ants in the cups. They bring the little bundles home and put them straight into the fire. When they have been roasted for some minutes they remove the cups, open them and squeeze the ants into a paste. They add salt and chilli and put the mixture back into the fire to bake. This chutney, which is very tasty, with a sharp clean taste, is generally eaten with liquor. At the beginning of the rains the Muria also catch the flying white ants, pull off their wings and fry the bodies.[2]

Other delicacies are the grubs which are found in the date-palm. These large white grubs are sought after by many others beside the Muria, and are bought even by high-caste Hindus in the bazaars for as much as two pice apiece. They are fried and eaten and sometimes oil is extracted from them.

262 276 524 The Muria also enjoy catching and eating the river crab, 'the blacksmith that takes his pincers and hammer about with him', 'the Raja who has hands and feet but lacks a head'.[3] Shrimps and prawns are common in the streams; a prawn is described as 'the boy with eight feet, twelve shoulders and sixteen horns'.

262 Most of these delicacies, fried with a little chilli, are used as 'savouries' when the people go to drink salphi juice or other liquor. Men and boys going in the evening towards the sago-palms may be seen carrying little leaf-bundles containing fried frogs, grubs and a chutney of red ants. These relieve the sweetness of the salphi juice and the unpleasant taste of the mahua spirit.

262 843 Beef is still eaten in all parts of Bastar, even by the sophisticated Raja Muria who are so loud in their protests that they have abandoned it. An interesting story connects the practice with the *dohada* cravings of pregnancy. The Muria theory, which is the old Hindu theory, is that it is the child in the womb who is responsible for the mother's irrational desires. 'A Brahmin woman six months pregnant had a craving for beef and went to a Ganda to get some. For fear of the husband he refused, but his wife gave her two

[171] [1] Crooke has an interesting note on frog-eating. 'The Musahar of Mirzapur, he says, eat two kinds, a small and a large, at marriages. The Burmese certainly eat them and boiled frogs are said to be exposed for sale in their bazaars. I hear that the Burmese prisoners in the Benares jail have been caught eating them alive. Mr Bower tells me that he knows of Saises in Oudh fattening frogs for food in earthen jars.'—*N.I. Notes and Queries*, Vol. II, p. 78.

[171] [2] In South India ants are believed to be a tonic; there is a Tamil proverb that 'If you eat a thousand ants, you will get the strength of an elephant'. A paste made with ants is recorded as being used with curry in Kanara. Winged termites are widely eaten, and sometimes their bodies are sun-dried and stored. The queen termite is considered a special delicacy, fried or raw; Tamil athletes are said to keep themselves in trim by swallowing it raw and then sprinting a couple of miles. See S. T. Moses, 'Ants and Folk-Beliefs in South India', *Man in India*, Vol. VIII, pp. 1 *ff*.

[278] [3] The viscous substance adhering to the carapace of a crab is believed to be good for ear-ache.

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small pieces. When the Brahmin discovered it, he killed his wife and ripped open her belly in order to remove the meat and thus save her from a worse fate after death. But he found the child with one bit of beef in its mouth and the other in its hand: it cried, "It was not my mother who wanted it, but I myself" and so died.'

This story is popular and widespread. It is said that in olden days, the Maria and Muria regarded beef as taboo. But a Maria woman, like the Brahmin, developed a craving for it and ate some. When the husband was on the point of killing her, the child leapt out of the belly with a bit in its mouth and a bit in its hand crying, 'Not mother, but I'. From that day Maria and Muria have eaten beef.

FIG. 6. Uspal used for pounding tobacco or haldi
Length 1' 9"

The Muria take their regular meals, when they are at home, three times a day. At about 10 in the morning they eat boiled rice and a few leaf-cups of jawa. Jawa is the Muria's staple food. It is made of rice, mandia grain, or any of the smaller millets, exactly as the Gond and Baiga of the Central Provinces make pej. Mandia-jawa, however, has its special methods of preparation. The mandia is ground into flour and soaked in water for two days. Rice or kodon is put to boil and when half-cooked the mandia flour is added, the pot filled up with water and rice and flour are cooked together. This preparation is called *ganji*. At about 3 in the afternoon the Muria has a few leaf-cups of stale jawa, and then at 8 in the evening he again has boiled rice, this time with pulse of various kinds.

At every meal, there is chutney of tamarind, mango or mahua; any roots or vegetables available are cooked with chilli, haldi or garlic; meat, fish or eggs may be added. These delicacies vary, of course, from day to day, but the main diet rarely changes.

The Muria's kitchen is the simplest place possible. A horseshoe hearth of earth is made in a corner on the ground; half-a-dozen different earthen pots are used; there may be a wooden spoon and certainly some gourd ladles. Without increasing the cost, the standard of the cookery could be enormously improved; it has always astonished me no one has tried to improve village cookery in India.

When there is a feast, or at a marriage, most of the cooking is done out of doors and by the chelik. Long narrow trenches are dug in the ground, filled

252 with wood and fired; pots are placed in rows upon them. The motiari husk and clean the rice, and make the leaf-cups and plates, but the boys do the actual cooking. When the rice is ready it is tipped out in a great pile on bamboo mats. A pig, which is killed by being beaten on the head with a rice husker, is roasted in the fire till its hair is burnt off; it is skinned and cleaned. Flesh, bones and skin are cut up into little squares of equal size—an important matter, for it is essential that everyone should receive exactly the same amount. These pieces are fried in mahua oil, and put into large earthen pots with rice-water, salt, haldi and chilli and boiled till ready. Fish is prepared in much the same way, except that usually something sour is added to flavour it. Fowls are cooked in leaf-cups. The intestines are squeezed out, and the whole chicken with head and feet is roasted with a little salt. Eggs are wrapped in leaves and baked in the fire. Mongoose flesh is roasted and spiced with dried mangoes. Crocodile is boiled.

264 At the ghotul feasts and marriages I have attended everyone sits round in a big circle, and the boys (sometimes assisted by a few motiari) serve the food. The bits of meat are carefully counted out into leaf-cups and distributed. Rice is served from baskets or winnowing-fans direct onto leaf-plates.

At home, the family sits round the pot of jawa, which is taken straight off the fire and placed in the middle of the floor. Each has a little chutney on a leaf in front of him and an empty leaf-cup. The mother dips a gourd into the pot and helps the little children; then each member of the family helps himself. There is no idea that men should eat before women or elders before the children.

262 Doctors say that the Muria's food lacks fat and protein and criticize them for not taking more milk, ghee and vegetable. No doubt the Muria, like other 146 people, would eat more of these things if they could get them But there is no doubt that they do not like milk, and rarely take it themselves or give it to their children.

731 Famine is not common in Bastar, for the people can fall back on the almost limitless products of the forests. But it has been known, and a sombre song preserves its memory.

539

Nimâre weke dântona rawnâni	Vulture, whither away, vulture?
Dori bhumi dântona dâda le	I am going towards the west, brother,
Bhumi dukhâr dukâr roy dâda le	For the day of want has dawned.
Bhumi te dukâr arit roy dâda le	The famine is over all the world
Hikâl kuro bhaiso roy dâda le	Black, black are the buffaloes,
Sarpane bhaiso arit roy dâda le	And all of them have died, brother.
Podor pungâr doyo roy dâda le	White as cotton flowers are the cows,
Sarpane doyo arit roy dâda le	And all of them have fallen in summer.
Puhle dhelât rawnâl roy dâda le	On the broken clod the vulture,
Wetle marâte kawrâl roy dâda le	On the withered tree the crow,
Kawar woker inta roy dâda le	The crow is cawing, brother.
Raiyaka reyon kawrâl roy dâda le	It is ready to fly down.

VI. Honey

222 Honey was discovered by a Maria named Waddai who also gave his name to
539 the whole succession of Waddai diviners. 'Waddai went one day to a medium, with a gift of char nuts, seeking help for his sick son. On the way he met a monkey which had been outcasted for falling while jumping from a tree and

● 252

Cheik at Markabera threshing with their feet

Plate X

Winnowing grain. Note the first sheaf tied to the threshing pole

[p. 36 (B)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

524

Wori wori singār,
Bāni bāni pungār.
Rows and rows of decorations,
There are many kinds of flowers.
—A honeycomb.

Tutri bukāte bāri perek.
In a small hole is a small seed.
—*Lokti* bees.

Untie the she-buffalo and milk the peg.
—Getting honey from a hive.

A herd of cattle has one leader.
—The swarm and its queen.

Many flowers grow in the tank.
—A honeycomb.

Flower, flower, how it flowers!
What comes out of the flower?
—Bees.

I have recorded one song about bees, but I was unable to discover any games that illustrated the taking of a hive.

539

Song

The bees suck the kosra flower,
Search for the bees, Kotwar,
Send out the boys, Kotwar.
The bees suck the paddy flower,
Search for the bees, Kotwar,
Send out the boys, Kotwar.
The Manjhi says he'll give his daughter
To the boy who kills the bees.
An orphan chelik kills the bees,
He brings the hive and shows the Manjhi.
The Manjhi gives the boy his daughter.
The bees suck the mandia flower,
Search for the bees, Kotwar,
Send out the boys, Kotwar.

VII. Oil

Awa kare motai, tel kare chiknai, kapare kare barai. Food fattens, oil adorns, clothes dignify.—Muria saying

● 252

The Muria make many different kinds of oil; some for use in their carts, some for light, some for medicine, but most, of course, for food. The *gdraneyi* is extracted from mahua seed and is used mainly for cooking. So is the oil gained from the usual oil-seed crops, 'the slender trees that have a hundred babies', which are often raised in the *bāri* gardens. Seeds of the sarai tree are collected and make a useful oil. The fat of lizards and the grubs that live in the date-palm and the fat of cow, buffalo, goat, pig, cock, and several kinds of deer all yield oil which can be used for cooking and to mix with food. For lighting purposes and to oil the wheels of bullock-carts, oil made from the seed of the karanji, bandgul or aosom is used. Oil for anointing the bride and bridegroom in marriage and

[373 493]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

oil for anointing the bride and bridegroom in marriage and for the hair and body for toilet purposes is made from the mahua seed or indeed from any of the oils used in cooking.

The method of extracting oil from the mahua seed is as follows. A pot of water is placed on a fire near the oil-press and heated. Then into a bamboo cone, exactly like the *jib* in which rice-beer is prepared, is put the ground and dried seed. Covered with a small basket this is placed above the water-pot and the seed is steamed for about fifteen minutes. The steamed oil-seed is then tipped out into a small basket called *kora* and the operator presses it down with a rice-husker. When this small basket is full of closely pressed oil-seed, it is carried over to the press. This is called *gêramel*,[1] and is of a very primitive kind. A long forked branch is inserted into a hole made in a living tree about two feet above the ground. Underneath is placed the *gêratots*, a block of wood with lines carved on its upper surface to carry off the oil. The basket of oil-seed is placed on top of this and the bough is laid upon it. The women place large stones on the forked end of the bough, thus forming a heavy weight to press down the seed. In the fork is a peg to keep it in position. After about half an hour the oil begins to flow and drips down into an earthen pot below.

This work is generally done by women, often by the motiari. In Masora I once saw two motiari extracting oil from the seeds of the keuti tree. These girls fetched the seed from the jungle, broke it up with their feet, ground it, steamed it and then put it into the press. They said that the chelik had no oil for their hair and they were doing this, entirely on their own, to please them.

VIII. Hunting

The Muria will eat almost anything. They profess to despise the Maria for eating monkeys and in Koilibera they still talk about the time when W. V. Grigson camped along the northern road near the Abujhmar and the Maria of the Barsur Pargana, who came to see him, left not a single monkey

Fig. 7. Characteristic Muria bow
Length 3′ 6″

in the hills and stripped the whole forest of red ants. But near Jungani I saw a monkey's skin hanging up in a house and the people admitted that 'the children had eaten it'.[2] Crocodile is not disliked; after the skin is removed, the flesh, which is a little coarse, can yet be cooked and eaten

[1] This press resembles that reported as used in Assam and by the Korku.—K. P. Chattopadhyaya, 'Indian Oil Presses,' *Journal of the Indian Anthropological Institute*, Vol. I (1938), p. 43.

[2] Bison-horn Maria say that 'though its skin is black, the monkey's flesh is white as rice-beer'. They often roast the monkey in its skin and eat everything. If a man eats a monkey's placenta he will be as active as a monkey and able to jump from tree to tree. It is said that Kodaya Pedā's great-grandfather did this. The Weddai and Gaita of Dualkarka (and perhaps other villages) do not eat the flesh because the monkey helps them in their priestly duties—an obvious reference to Hanuman.

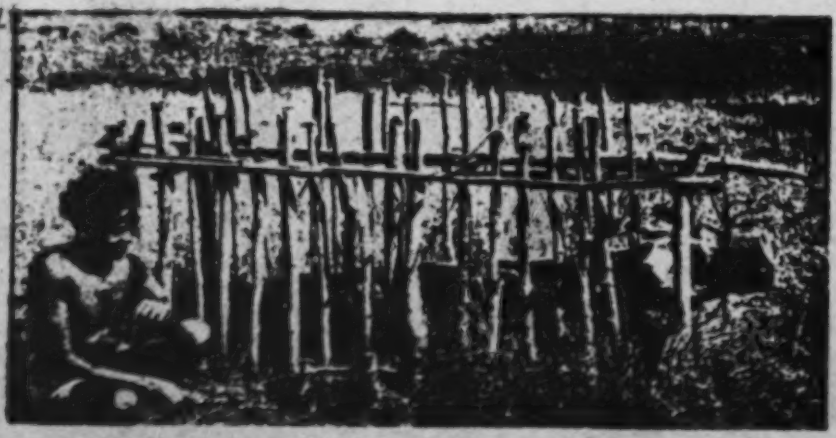
Plate XIII

516
252

Thelik of Mauora roasting a rat

A porcupine trap near Lohator

224



[p. 52(a)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 A W32 Gond A W32
Muria
Oraon AW39

Uraon dhangri

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142
291
301

Plate LXVII

Motiari of Kongera grinding

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142
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412

[R 320(6)]

Plate CXXVIII

A883
524

Wanjing Karsana : Rice-husking game, at Temrugaon

Rice-husking in fact

[253]

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

142
291
516
252
301

A girl cleans grain in a field at Garmiri; failure in preparing food is sometimes a cause of tragedy.

[facing p. 20]

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

252
531
516
301
285
302

Girl cleaning grain at Tikanpal before a decorated door

301
142

Hinga, a Maria girl of Rewali

[facing p. 28]

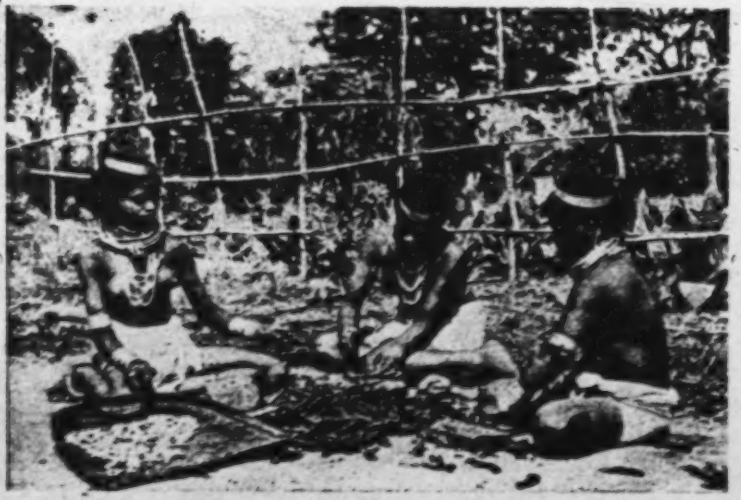
3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

285
301
482

Girl with basket at Marenda

Girls breaking pods at Khutepal

417
252
285
516



[facing p. 29]